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Division of Information

Reserve

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AGRICULTURE DOES ITS JOB

One of the really good jobs of organizing America's war production is the mobilizing of the nation's farm capacity. Thanks to the way it is being carried out, the American people are reasonably sure of having plenty to eat and wear, and there will be a large supply available for our allies.

Farm production for war this time is a different affair from what it was in World War I days. The job of organizing it got under way much earlier. Demands made by the Lend-Lease program and the building up of our ^{own} armed forces made it necessary to step up production of certain foodstuffs a full year ago. Machinery existed this time to further such an effort. The AAA, price supports and other devices--whatever one may think of them ordinarily--gave the Department of Agriculture tools with which to stimulate and direct as well as to control production according to needs.

In the other war there was not much guidance of agriculture's output. Under the impulse of the slogan Food Will Win the War and comparatively high prices, farmers pushed to the limit the production of about everything they could grow. This time the effort is being made to promote the growing of things most needed, such as dairy products, meats, canning crops and oils and fats. Wheat, the big performer in the other war, is being held down, as there is a carry-over of about a year's requirements in both this country and Canada.

It isn't easy to swing six or seven million farms into a production line. Farming is a long-time affair, adjusted to little-changeable factors of soil, weather, equipment, biological facts and the special aptitudes of the individuals on the land. But, considering the limitations, the response to the Food for Freedom program has paralleled that of industry--and more quickly. Total farm production broke all records last year. Farmers are being asked to break them again.

Dairymen are urged to raise milk production to one hundred and twenty-five billion pounds this year, poultry producers to supply more than four billion dozen eggs, both on top of record-smashing increases last year. Hogs are to be stepped up to a slaughter of eighty-three million head--nearly ten million above last year--with an increase of three hundred million pounds of lard. Oil-bearing crops such as soybeans, peanuts and flaxseed, are being stimulated to replace lost sources of supply in the Far East. So are the principal vegetable, canning crops needed by the Army and the British as well as American consumers. Omitting wheat, our 1942 food output is expected to be a full 25 per cent above that once counted as our normal supply.

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In some ways American farming is better prepared to do a full job than in 1917-18. The growing mechanization of farming has released more than forty million acres once devoted to producing feed for work stock. The shift to power machinery has also increased the production per worker an average of 30 per cent more than during World War I. Better types of livestock and crops and improved cultural practices have added to the productive capacity.

But the increased output must be achieved under handicaps. High wages in war-production plants and the patriotic desire of farmers' sons to participate in the war have drained off the labor supply. Another disadvantage is the curtailment of farm-implement manufacture. Priorities limit it for this manufacturing year to only 83 per cent of the 1940 production, a figure equal to only about 50 per cent of the 1941 manufacture.

The clamor of political leaders has blurred the real measure of agriculture's war effort. Under the leadership of Secretary Claude R. Wickard, a sound production program has been worked out and is in operation. Out on the land, millions of farm men, women and children are working long hours with precious little complaint. American farmers and their families will do the job set before them, weather and human limitations permitting, because they are that kind of folks. There probably will be a few shortages, but the American people will be the best fed of any in the warring countries.

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